DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 056 687 JC 720 003

AUTHOR Kintzer, Frederick C.
TITLE Decision Making in the Multi-Unit College.
INSTITUTION American Association of Junior Colleges, Washington, D.C.; California Univ., Los Angeles. ERIC Clearinghouse for Junior Coll. Information.
PUB DATE Jan 72
NOTE 4p.
JOURNAL CIT Junior College Research Review; v6 n5 Jan 1972

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS *Administration; Administrative Organization; *Decision Making; Institutional Administration; *Junior Colleges; *Management Systems; *Multicampus Districts; Research Reviews (Publications)

ABSTRACT

Current problems in institutional organization are often those directly associated with the degree of autonomy allowed local administrators, the amount of centralization or decentralization of authority and the lack of communication. This review focuses on the development and presentation of a pattern for decentralizing the decision making process in multi-unit educational systems, emphasizing community college administration. The multi-branch community college district in theory provides opportunity for a more economical and efficient management and a minimum duplication of space, equipment and staff. Every educational institution should have as its prime purpose the development of an environment of learning--a major function of leadership. The four key tasks of leadership are: (1) defining the institution's mission and role, (2) building the institution's purpose into its social structure, (3) defending the integrity of the institution, and (4) gaining the consent of constituent units. The effectiveness of any organization is closely related to the quality of leadership found in the chief executive. Strong central control can result in maximum efficiency, economy, and impartial treatment of institutions, but it risks depersonalization, avoidance of responsibility, and lower morale. Maximum local control can encourage creativity, increase program relevancy and further morale, but it can result in inefficient handling of matters of organization-wide concern. (MN)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL OFFICE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

ED056687

JC 720 003

ERIC

Volume 6, Number 5

JUNIOR COLLEGE RESEARCH REVIEW

January 1972

Published by the American Association of Junior Colleges

DECISION MAKING IN THE MULTI-UNIT COLLEGE

In all of higher education a most perplexing concept is institutional organization and administrative control. With increasing frequency, leaders of expanding institutions are forced to make crucial operational decisions before the philosophical framework has been carefully thought out. The first problems to appear are often those directly associated with the degree of autonomy allowed local administrators, the amount of centralization or decentralization of authority, and the lack of communication.

Need for a philosophical basis becomes particularly vital in institutions when multiple units replace single campuses – when a university becomes a multiversity, when a senior college is divided into cluster colleges, or when, as in the case of the community college, two or more colleges replace a single large institution. Administrators are the first to realize that, without a conceptual master plan, intelligent decisions consistent with the institution's basic mission would hardly be forthcoming.

Evidence is growing that the multi-educational systems are threatening the solidarity and cohesion of individual units. Problems are becoming much more complicated on the individual campus. The local president is less and less able to carry his own case to the press, and less and less able to build a supportive constituency. Flexibility, differentiation, and individual responsiveness are gradually diminishing. Political safety, rather than education leadership, is becoming the vital concern (11:32-35). What can be done to reverse this course?

The caption, "unprecedented crisis for higher education," was recently used to introduce the federal administration's major higher education legislative proposal. The report, prepared by a special task force and featured in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, described the multi-unit style of administrative organization as one of the pressures that has "accelerated the trend to homogeneity, diminished the sense of campus identity and solidarity, eroded the role of the president, encouraged the rise of system-wide interest groups, and set the stage for the politicizing of the university."

"The growth of these systems [the report continues] and the resulting budget and political problems make it ever more difficult for even the most enlightened state administration to avoid a damaging and self-reinforcing cycle."

The task force concludes this portion of its argument for reform with several hard-hitting questions. What gains (and risks) would there be in breaking up large systems? Short of casting them aside, how can large systems be more effectively managed? Finally, the team begs the question by asking: What can be done about reversing the trend toward central control within systems? (10:4-6).

This paper focuses on the development and presentation of a pattern or model for decentralizing the decision-making process in multi-unit educational systems. It will emphasize, and draw its illustrative material from, community college administration.

MULTI-UNIT SYSTEMS IN HIGHER EDUCATION: AN OVERVIEW

The Multi-Unit Community College District

The generic term, "multi-institution or multi-unit community college district," is defined as: A community college operating two or more campuses within its district under a single governing board, with each campus having a separate site administrator. The multi-unit community college district is not to be confused with a university-operated system or a state system, although similarities are readily apparent (4:103; 5; 7; 9).

The late 1960s and the 1970s are likely to be known as the years of multi-unit development – a period when single colleges (usually districts) reorganized into two or more institutions. Reasons for changing the administrative pattern range from the simple necessity of economic survival to the more laudable reason of equal student access to better educational opportunities. While this pattern is not exclusive to large urban centers, it has expanded most rapidly in the big cities of the nation. The critical issues of this style of administration are therefore directly related to the pressures generated by big city governance itself.

The multi-branch. A multi-unit district operating as one legal institution with two or more branches or campuses within the district. Branches, usually headed by a second-level administrator, but often coordinated by an assistant superintendent or vice-president at the central office, specialize in technical curricula, in adult education (extension centers), or in specific subject matter divisions.

The words "legal" and "branches" establish the tone of this organizational style. Controls are more frequently centralized at the district office, which therefore carries a larger administrative staff. In extreme cases, the super-organization tends to stultify much of the individuality of the branches, and the campus administrators (occasionally, several "deans" of equal authority have joint responsibility) are little more than "building principals." Close cooperation among the branches and dispassionate coordination by central office officials are vital to the success of this pattern. According to the logic of an identical-twin relationship, the campuses offer instruction of uniform quality. Operating costs – instruction, maintenance, etc. – would also be comparatively small.

The multi-branch concept, in theory, provides opportunity for a more economical and efficient management and a minimum duplication of space, equipment, and staff. We would argue against the tendency toward centralized control inherent in this system.

The multi-college: A multi-college operating two or more individual colleges within its district. Individuality is the distinguishing feature of this pattern. Under the multi-college philosophy, the colleges operate with maximum autonomy. The leaders, ordinarily called presidents, are delegated greater authority; they are the official spokesmen of their colleges and represent their constituency before the board of trustees.

While individual colleges live within the framework of district policy, they are more likely to reflect the individuality of their particular communities – including, of course, the student body, the faculty and administration, and the general community. This framework of individuality implies greater opportunity for experimentation and innovation in a variety of services. Central office responsibilities are kept to a minimum. According to the philosophy supporting this pattern, an institution is best governed by the individuals who belong to it – by the administration, faculty, and students who identify closely with its history and development.

The chief executive of the community college district, most often called "The Chancellor," is largely involved with the district board of trustees and with such functions as district-wide master planning. His role of district representative within a rapidly growing higher education bureaucracy at the state level absorbs more and more of his time and energies. Ever-widening interest in higher education by the federal government adds both a blessing and a curse to his total responsibility as an educational leader.

Activities in federal and state government, however, are diluting as well as negating the tendency to decentralize community colleges. The belief is growing that "the time to reverse the present trend . . . is now, or the chance will be lost for a long time" (10:6).

The multi-college style, with its implied advantages of democratic relationships, decentralized authority, and potential for extending communication is growing in favor. Credit for this trend should, in part, be given to regional accreditation agencies, which are progressively seeing the incongruity of presuming to evaluate all campuses by a single yardstick. In a number of states (including California, Illinois, and Michigan), teams have openly and determinedly challenged the sense of this notion.

The Multiversity

Kerr describes the large university as "a whole series of communities and activities held together by a common name, a common governing board, and related purposes" (6:1). He calls the university "an inconsistent institution." While serving many communities "almost slavishly," it criticizes the society "sometimes unmercifully." While "devoted to equality of opportunity, it is itself a class society," where rather than a concert of common causes, these interests are "quite varied, even conflicting" (6:19).

As a community college increases in size and complexity, administration, similar to that of a multiversity, tends to become more formalized and separated as a distinct function in the effort to hold together a complex organization. With the development of systems of coordination, the location of institutional power shifts from inside to outside the original community, encompassing a diversity of community groups. The world, which was once external and comparatively unrelated, becomes an integral part of the institution.

The role of the president shifts to accommodate institutional changes. Like his university colleagues, the community college superintendent or chancellor faces in many directions. In Kerr's classic statement, the president of a multiversity (or a multi-unit community college) becomes a leader, educator, creator, initiator, wielder of power, pump; and (almost facetiously) he is also officeholder, caretaker, inheritor, consensus-seeker, persuader, bottleneck. But he is mostly a mediator (6:36). He "should sound like a mouse at home, and look like a lion abroad." The president, Kerr concludes, is "one of the marginal men in a democratic society . . . but at the very center of the total process" (6:30).

Kerr's representation is basically the traditional concept of the university chief executive's role. Very few perform well in all the categories described, but in this day, those who survive must be successful as coordinators, arbitrators, and providers of services to faculties and students.

The Cluster College

The cluster college concept introduces specific analogies to the multi-unit community college district. Doi describes two elements common to senior institutions engaged in developing the cluster idea: (1) a search for attainment of "the best of two worlds, the world of smallness and the world of bigness;" and (2) a search for a system "to develop and to maintain a distinctiveness in each unit" (1:390). The author also mentions the "first and major task" of the cluster college administrator, namely, to establish a linkage system and clarify the relationship among members of the system (1:390).

Doi's comments, which concluded a Conference on the Cluster College Concept held in March 1967 at Claremont Colleges (California) under Carnegie Corporation sponsorship, could be literally translated into purposes of the multi-unit community college district. His identification of reasons for and the importance of clustering is applicable to two-year as well as to four-year colleges:

> The importance of the clustering concept to a given college or university depends in large part on whether it sees it as a strategy for survival, a strategy for expansion, a strategy for the reform of education . . . . I think it important for an institution to have a clear consciousness of why it chooses to become a part of a cluster (1).

Community colleges are adapting the cluster concept to other than administrative organization. Curriculum departmentalization, particularly in occupational programs – planning curriculum for "clusters" or "families" of jobs, as Harris recommends – is widely practiced in community colleges within multi-unit districts. A common core of studies in each family is provided in the first year with specialization in the second year to match employer demands (2:42). The Cypress College House Plan (North Orange County Community College District, California) illustrates the cluster concept in another dimension. Similar in some respects to the Stephens College idea, the key to the plan is decentralization – in food services, lounges, relaxing areas, and library services – as well as in student government and student activities. The Cypress Plan also provides opportunities for independent study, for auto-tutorial programming, and for student dialogue and discourse with faculty, counselors, and advisers (13:26-31).

If one accepts the values inherent in individuality and sees advantages in the spirit of competitiveness and belonging, one is obliged to support the concept of decentralized responsibility and function. The question most vital to this paper, then is how these concepts can be maximized *within* a central agency. More specifically, how can the multi-college style be implemented within the framework of the multi-unit community college district?

MORE LOCAL AUTONOMY

Every educational institution, no matter what it claims as its specializations, should have as its prime purpose the development of an environment of learning, to provide students with opportunities to acquire knowledge and skills that are meaningful and easily available to them. The development of such an environment – the distinctive goal of colleges and universities – is a major function of leadership. How much autonomy should be allowed the administrator who seeks to build a learning environment? "When [in Selznick's words] should an activity be thought of as distinctive enough to be allowed a relatively independent organizational existence?" (12:138-9).

Clues to a pattern or model for effective decision making in multi-unit systems are provided in Selznick's discussion of the

functions of institutional leadership and their relationship to a theory of professional or elite autonomy. If an organization is to function effectively, four key tasks in leadership must, in Selznick's judgment, be understood and implemented:

1. defining the institution's mission and role
2. building the institution's purpose into its social structure
3. defending the integrity of the institution
4. gaining the consent of constituent units, ordering internal conflicts, and maintaining "a balance of power appropriate to the fulfillment of key institutional commitments" (12:62-64).

As a new multi-unit system identifies and develops these functions – beginning with role definition and progressing through the more complex tasks of balancing internal and external power structures – decentralized decision making normally increases. In the early stages of its work, the administrative group is subjected to tighter controls, i.e., given less autonomy by the chief executive and his board of trustees. More responsibility and authority are granted as the staff matures in its assignment – when it shows evidence, for example, of being able to resist both outside pressures (doubts and misunderstandings circulating in the larger community) and jealousies from within the organization.

Attention is given to this continuum in the following brief discussion of each of the four functions posed by Selznick.

1. Defining the Institution's Mission and Role

Development of institutional goals is the first order of business for the chief executive in a newly formed multi-system. A highly centralized structure is appropriate during this formative period when the top leadership – the community college district chancellor, presidents of the developing campuses, deans of students, and possibly librarians – defines institutional goals. At the outset, centralization permits what Selznick calls "the autonomous maturation of values" (12:113), a time when the leadership establishes philosophy and attempts to unify the initial administrative group in a series of common understandings.

At this stage of the new institution's development, the chief executive should look for signs of maturity. How successful is the president of a newly organized campus in the system in achieving major tasks assigned to him? Is he systematically fulfilling institutional goals, or is he wavering indecisively? Is he allowing his newly elected staff and faculty enough freedom to maximize initiative and creativity in their planning? Are students and community leaders involved in the planning and, if so, does morale appear to be high? How successful has he been so far in defending the integrity of the institution? Unfortunately for the chancellor, much of the evidence he gathers to answer these questions comes secondhand and is largely subjective. Except for some obvious guidelines, his judgment is mostly intuitive.

When an understanding of institutional goals is thought to have been achieved, the chief executive may logically relinquish controls and delegate responsibility with increasing rapidity. Put another way, maximum direction from the central office decreases as the homogeneity of line and staff officers increases. Documentation of this unification effort is reflected in the first broad policy manual of board policies and supporting administrative procedures.

2. Building Institutional Purposes into Its Social Structure

In the initial months, the district administration should provide maximum direction and services. As the colleges develop techniques for meeting their local service requirements, the central office should relinquish control of services – maintaining only those that are more economically supported at "headquarters."

Matching purposes with the social structure implies knowledge of the various communities represented in the college district. This task, to be accomplished primarily by the leadership in individual colleges, is a highly creative one. It requires shaping the character of the particular institution and, according to the personality of the community to be served, sensitizing the staff to appropriate ways of thinking and reacting.

Community ideals should be determined through use of advisory committees and local resources and capabilities should be analyzed to give direction to the development of the initial curricula and physical plant planning for the two or more institutions.

At this stage, the college administrations should be allowed to select staff who, in addition to being committed to the district philosophy, seem most likely to fit, and perhaps to effect changes in, community values. Thus, in selection of personnel, both professional and non-professional, the colleges rather than the district office should have the final decision.

In curriculum development, however, shared responsibility (between central office and campus administrators) is advisable, particularly in the matter of deciding where in the total service area expensive occupational or technical programs should be located. Matters relative to course content and organization, and to textbook, library book, and periodical selection clearly are within the province of the individual colleges.

3. Defending the Integrity of the Institution

One of the least understood responsibilities of institutional leadership, this function refers specifically to "maintaining values and distinctive identity." Success in protecting the particular set of values embodied in the community college system depends largely on the accuracy of goal definitions and the level of support now given to them by the new staff. A greater degree of institutional autonomy is needed in districts where colleges are located in comparatively isolated areas, in contrast to those established in a single large city composed of similar communities.

At this point in the system's development, the character of the district organization is supposedly established; each unit, under increasingly autonomous leadership, has a recognizable personality of its own. Devices such as the college catalogs, other descriptive publications, faculty handbooks, and student handbooks reflect this individuality and commit the colleges in writing to prescribed action programs.

4. Gaining the Consent of Constituent Units

Implicit in this function are the ability of the organization as a whole to protect itself against internal conflicts and competing community groups and also its potential for effecting change. Although other styles of internal governance may be advisable to handle particular situations during an organization's initial years, the goal should be a sharing of authority among decision-making groups in an environment of free-flowing communication among administrators, faculty, and students alike. Each of these groups has substantial power that should be concentrated to provide an environment for more effective learning – an environment identified by Millett as a "community of authority" (8:260). Maintaining a balance of power among these groups is necessary if the district is to fulfill its mission.

Unfortunately, there are times in decision making when authority-sharing is neither possible nor feasible. Time considerations and other complicating factors occasionally prohibit consensus decision making. On these occasions, sub-administrators, recognizing the need for a decision, must, in good faith, be willing to accept the chancellor's action. The district executive – realizing that "the ship must stay afloat" – should move swiftly and decisively on such matters. He must, himself, accept and assume (even if only minimum faculty consultation is possible) the heavy and often onerous duty of top leadership.

The chief executive officer needs further to recognize that the quality of decision making is closely related to the amount of relevant information available and that, while he can and should delegate decision making to subordinates, he cannot relinquish or sidestep the legal authority that is his and his alone (3:230).

Open and continuous communication with community leaders is vital to institutional stability. The district executive is constantly testing community reactions to the developing educational enterprise through the board of trustees and citizen advisory committees. An organization's ability to fulfill key commitments depends on a delicate balance of internal and external power groups – a basic responsibility of the chief administrative officer.

It is axiomatic that the effectiveness of any organization is closely related to the quality of leadership found in the chief executive – leadership that is able to maintain a high productive output throughout the organization and to maximize external communication with the most significant of the power groups. Strong *central* control can result in maximum efficiency, economy, and impartial treatment of institutions, but it risks depersonalization, avoidance of responsibility, and lower morale. Maximum *local* control can encourage creativity, increase program relevancy, and further morale, but it can result in inefficient handling of matters of organization-wide concern, in interinstitutional competition, and in communication problems.

No precise pattern of decision making can realistically be announced for multi-unit educational systems. This is particularly true in the case of the community college, which is primarily a locally "owned," locally governed, and community-oriented enterprise. The proper balance of central office and local college strength will therefore vary according to community characteristics as well as to the administrative style of the chief executive. As for task responsibility: fiscal, property, and personnel management are probably best handled in the central office; curriculum development, instructional methods, and student personnel services are more within the jurisdiction of the individual colleges. Above all, a spirit of cooperation, district awareness, and institutional pride are essential in achieving the appropriate balance of decision-making responsibility.

There are, of course, no easy solutions to the complex issues raised in the opening paragraphs of this paper. The model presented is no panacea for all the management ills of higher education. Agreement on the rationale proposed for the model and adherence to the described principles, however, could help to reverse the trend toward central control within educational systems.

Frederick C. Kintzer
Associate Professor of Higher Education
and Vice-Chairman of the Department of Education
University of California at Los Angeles

REFERENCES

1. Doi, James I. "Administrative Concerns." (Comments on the Conference on the Cluster College Concept) *The Journal of Higher Education* 38:7; October 1967.
2. Harris, Norman C. *Technical Education in the Junior College*. Washington, D.C.: American Association of Junior Colleges, 1964.
3. Iannaccone, Laurence. "An Approach to the Informal Organization of the School." *Behavioral Science and Educational Administration*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. The Sixty-third Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education, 1964.
4. Jensen, Arthur M. *An Investigation of the Administration of Junior College Districts with Multi-Campuses*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. University of California, Los Angeles, 1965.
5. Jones, Milton O. *The Development of Multi-Unit Junior Colleges*. Washington, D.C.: American Council on Education, May 1968. ED 023 391
6. Kerr, Clark. *The Uses of the University*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1963.
7. Kintzer, Frederick C.; Jensen, Arthur M.; and Hansen, John S. *The Multi-Institution Junior College District*. ERIC Clearinghouse for Junior Colleges, Monograph Series No. 7. Washington, D.C.: American Association of Junior Colleges, 1969. ED 030 415
8. Millett, John D. *The Academic Community*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1962.
9. Morrissey, Kermit C. "Creative Leadership of Multi-Unit Colleges." *Junior College Journal* 38:1; September 1967.
10. "Proposals for Higher Education by Federally Initiated Panel." *The Chronicle of Higher Education* March 15, 1971.
11. Report on Higher Education. (Frank Newman, Chairman) Washington, D.C.: Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (Advance draft), March 1971.
12. Selznick, Philip. *Leadership in Administration*. Evanston, Illinois: Row, Peterson, 1957.
13. Walker, Daniel G. "The House Plan at Cypress." *Junior College Journal* 38:7; April 1968. ED 025 985

ERIC CLEARINGHOUSE FOR JUNIOR COLLEGES

ARTHUR M. COHEN, *Principal Investigator and Director*

The Clearinghouse operates under contract with the U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare, Office of Education

Copyright is claimed by AAJC until January 1977.

JUNIOR COLLEGE RESEARCH REVIEW

American Association of Junior Colleges
One Dupont Circle, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20036

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS COPYRIGHTED MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY the American Association of Junior Colleges. TO ERIC AND ORGANIZATIONS OPERATING UNDER AGREEMENTS WITH THE U.S. OFFICE OF EDUCATION. FURTHER REPRODUCTION OUTSIDE THE ERIC SYSTEM REQUIRES PERMISSION OF THE COPYRIGHT OWNER."

UNIVERSITY OF CALIF.
LOS ANGELES

JAN 6 1972

CLEARINGHOUSE FOR
JUNIOR COLLEGE
INFORMATION